

Good morning. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Jerry Sept and I live in Helena. I have a 21 year old son, Ryan, with special needs. Through no fault of his, ours, or yours, he was born with a disabling condition. He has been involved in Special Olympics and Boy Scouts. With accommodations, he was able to achieve a rank of Eagle Scout. Ryan has had success in his schooling, work experiences and his scouting because of his own dedication and the individual programming which has been in place throughout the years to meet his special needs. Much of his success can be attributed to the cadre of people from educators, counselors, job coaches and Scout Masters who advocated for, mentored, instructed, and provided experiences for Ryan. Thanks to the support of the State of Montana, through the Developmental Disabilities and the Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, Ryan is now in the work force on a very limited part-time basis and he can be a productive, proud member of our community. He independently rides the bus to work - which is where he is at the moment. Just as when he was growing up, he still needs a variety of supports in place so that he can be successful at work. A very energetic and capable job coach trains him for his work tasks, coaches him to master those tasks, and troubleshoots to resolve any issues which interfere with his success. Without the support of a job coach he would not be employable. Funding for that job coach is essential to allow him to participate in an adult work role, an opportunity the rest of us take for granted.

I am in support of at least the 2% provider rate increase that is proposed in the State of Montana budget. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.